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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4937
INFO RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHZH/HAITI COLLECTIVE
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 1348
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 1179
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J2 MIAMI FL
RUCOWCV/CCGDSEVEN MIAMI FL//OLE/OI//

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 002433

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR
DRL
S/CRS
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR
INR/IAA (BEN-YEHUDA)
TREASURY FOR JEFFREY LEVINE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/30/2011
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [ASEC](#) [KCRM](#) [KJUS](#) [HA](#)
SUBJECT: HIGH ANXIETY OVER SECURITY

REF: PAUP 2387

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C) The recent spate of high-profile kidnappings and the GoH's stumbling response has become the singular issue in Haitian politics and public discourse. While panic has not yet set in, the Port-au-Prince population has begun to alter their work and private routines and much of daily life again revolves around security concerns. Much of the fear is based as much on the perception of worsening security resulting from a few brazen incidents, most notably the recent kidnappings of schoolchildren on their buses and attempted armed intrusions into schools. Within Haiti's sharply class-conscious society, many of Port-au-Prince's middle and upper-classes believe that the chimeres in the slums are orchestrating the kidnappings with the aim of fomenting instability and reasserting their political influence as they did under Aristide. Indeed, many upper-class Haitians believe that Aristide continues to give direction to and/or benefit from in the financial aspects of the kidnappings. Many Haitians do not understand or simply will not credit that criminals come from all levels of society, taking advantage of a decimated and corrupted police and judiciary, rather than hatching some kind of lower-class revenge on elites.

12. (C) Meanwhile, law-abiding residents of Haiti's lower-class and slum neighborhoods, who continue to suffer the most from lawlessness and gang activity, are also increasingly impatient with the government. After rumors spread on December 20 that the police were holding kidnappers, including a police officer, at a local jail in the upper Delmas area of Port-au-Prince, a crowd gathered outside the station, demanding that the police deliver them the suspects. The mob ultimately provoked a confrontation with MINUSTAH forces called in control the crowd, burning a UN vehicle, blocking Route Delmas (one of the cities major arteries), and tying up traffic for hours, despite a police announcement that the suspect in custody was a bus driver accused of a hit-and-run incident.

13. (C) As reported in ref A, the growing insecurity has united and focused an otherwise disorganized and undisciplined parliament in criticizing the government, which finished its last session by demanding results from the Prime

Minister. Only two days later on the evening of December 15, gang members from Cite Soleil kidnapped Senator Andres Riche on route national one as he returned to Port-au-Prince with a group of other Senators from the north. Riche managed to escape from Cite Soleil in the middle of the night after a dispute broke out among his captors, but the incident combined and brought to a head the political, public, and media pressure on the government to act decisively against the Cite Soleil gangs in particular and against criminals in general. In several public appearances during the following week, Prime Minister Alexis notably toughened his rhetoric against gang-members, and claimed privately that he had been misquoted regarding his desire for negotiations with bandits.

14. (C) The parliamentary recess for the holidays delayed any immediate moves by parliament to hold Alexis accountable, and SRSG Mulet told the Ambassador that he was intervening directly with political parties to ask them to ease their criticism of Alexis in order to ensure the stability of the government. The pause in political activity before the holidays give the GoH and MINUSTAH time to take action and stave off an immediate political crisis. Simply an increased show of force, however, will not do. MINUSTAH has visibly increased their troop presence on the streets throughout Port-au-Prince and into Cite Soleil over the past several months, but the passivity of those troops in preventing crime has, to a degree, worsened MINUSTAH's reputation, as stories of crimes committed in plain sight of MINUSTAH multiply. Conversely, decisive action by MINUSTAH and the GoH would have an outsized impact on public opinion, indicating a clear shift in policy and resolve on the part of the authorities.

15. (C) Though it appears that kidnapping in Port-au-Prince

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has spiked since late November, based on limited access to statistics and anecdotal accounts, we do not believe overall crime is appreciably higher than it has been over the past two years. Outside of Port-au-Prince, most of the rest of the country remains, as it always has been, relatively peaceful. In most instances, kidnappers are either choosing targets of opportunity (for example a senator on the most dangerous stretch of road in the country after dark) or otherwise exploiting some kind of inside information. Most Haitians take reasonable precautions and continue about their business. The traffic and street bustle of Port-au-Prince appears to be as intense as ever. The GoH and MINUSTAH must change, however, the public perception that crime is spinning out of control, or face a combination of political protest and street demonstrations that will threaten the stability of the government.

SANDERSON